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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [DA](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DANISH DCM COMMENTS ON CARTOON CONTROVERSY

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

¶1. (C) Danish DCM Torkild Byg told Poloff February 20 that Denmark is getting mixed signals from the Iraqi Government on whether the Danes are welcome in Iraq in the aftermath of protests over publication of the cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed. Foreign Minister Zebari and Defense Minister Dulaymi have both publicly welcomed continued Danish troop and reconstruction presence in Iraq. However, Sadrist Transportation Minister Selam al-Maliki, has twice called for a boycott of contacts and trade with both Denmark and Norway.

The governors of Basra and Karbala have made similar demands. Byg told Poloff that the Danish parliamentary mandate for deployment in Iraq expires in June. The Danish government (which according to Byg has been strengthened by the cartoon controversy) wants to continue the deployment but will not stay if their presence is unwelcome.

¶2. (C) Byg said that the "struggling" Danish government has closed its embassies and withdrawn all diplomats from Damascus, Beirut, Jakarta, Teheran and Istanbul. He said that Beirut and Damascus may be closed for a long time. The boycott of Danish goods by Muslim countries is having an impact though Danish exports to the region (about 2.5% of total Danish exports) are mostly cheese and butter. He said that the boycott may shave a half percent from Denmark's projected 3% GDP growth for 2006. He added that the Danes have closed a factory in Saudi Arabia affecting 300 jobs.
KHALILZAD